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DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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SUBJECT: PRC EDUCATION VICE MINISTER SUPPORTS PROPOSAL TO INCREASE NUMBER OF U.S. STUDENTS IN CHINA

¶1. (SBU) Summary: PRC Education Vice Minister Hao Ping embraced a U.S. proposal to double the projected number of U.S. students studying in China to 100,000 over the next four years. During an October 13 meeting with EAP A/S Campbell, Vice Minister Hao expressed hope to reach agreement on the proposal in time for President Obama's November visit to China. Vice Minister Hao for his part argued for the creation of a high-level bilateral dialogue on educational and cultural exchanges and expressed interest in increasing the number of Chinese elementary school principals and teachers studying in the United States. End Summary.

U.S. Initiative to Increase American Students in China

¶2. (SBU) During his October 13 meeting with PRC Education Vice Minister Hao Ping, EAP A/S Campbell outlined a U.S. initiative to increase the number of American high school, undergraduate and graduate students studying in China to 100,000 over the next four years. Noting the increase over the last few years of U.S. students studying overseas and in particular the sharp increase in the number of students studying Chinese language and culture, A/S Campbell underscored that this initiative would demonstrate the robust nature of U.S.-China relations and affirmed U.S. intentions to work with the Ministry of Education to develop a program to create a deeper engagement between U.S. students and China.

¶3. (SBU) EAP DAS Shear noted that high school students would participate in short-term programs and study tours, and undergraduate and graduate students on long-term study programs. Universities would receive grants to enhance existing programs or initiate new ones. Without the initiative, the level of U.S. students studying in China over the next four years was estimated to reach 52,000. The proposal sought to increase this by 48,000, of which 32,000 would be undergraduate and graduate students. The program, to be funded through a public-private partnership, would establish a stand-alone institution to provide funding for studies in China.

Vice Minister Hao Welcomes the Initiative

¶4. (SBU) Stating he was "very encouraged" by the proposal, Vice Minister Hao praised President Obama's emphasis on education. Vice Minister Hao said that the U.S. initiative would have a long-lasting impact on Sino-U.S. relations by enhancing mutual understanding and greater learning of the two countries' respective cultures. He expressed hope that the two sides could reach consensus on the initiative before President Obama's visit, as it would have "an enormous impact" on the two countries' relations.

¶5. (SBU) Hao cited progress since the onset of student

exchanges during the period of Deng Xiaoping and President Carter, noting that over 400,000 Chinese students had studied in the United States since diplomatic relations were established. Over 70,000 foreign students were registered in China, Hao reported, of which the greatest numbers were from Korea, Japan and the United States. However, in the past two years, the United States had surpassed Japan in having the second-largest number of students. Hao praised the numerous American universities with programs for overseas study in China, including Stanford University's campus at Peking University.

Maximizing Cooperation

¶6. (SBU) A/S Campbell said the U.S would provide details of the initiative to PRC and suggested both sides consider how to present the education initiative during President Obama's visit. A/S Campbell invited Vice Minister Hao to the United States in 2010 to discuss programs to facilitate exchange and to hear his views on implementing these initiatives. A/S Campbell suggested reporting progress on education issues in the context of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue. Vice Minister Hao agreed on the importance of including the initiative in the Strategic and Economic Dialogue, adding that educational exchanges involved the least amount of dispute and confrontation and that both sides could reach consensus through minimal negotiation.

PRC Proposal

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¶7. (SBU) Vice Minister Hao said he sought to increase the number of Chinese elementary school principals and teachers studying in the United States. Vice Minister Hao underscored the importance of continued dialogue on people-to-people cooperation and reaching a consensus on the establishment of a PRC-proposed vice-premier-level bilateral annual dialogue on educational and cultural exchange (septel) during President Obama's visit. A/S Campbell replied that while the idea of such a high-level dialogue was important, it might be best framed as an add-on to bilateral dialogues already underway.

¶8. (U) Delegation cleared this cable.
HUNTSMAN